

Farm Chances for a Thousand Men

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A MOVABLE COMMANDMENT.

If they have movable feasts, why not have a movable commandment?

I notice that a learned and upright judge in Portland has handed down a decision to the effect that some two million acres of land that the Southern Pacific Railroad company has held title to, and some of which it has sold, and much of which it has improved, is really not the property of the Southern Pacific at all, but that the title will be resumed by the government, which many years ago willingly and for valuable consideration granted that land to the railroad.

Some of my other friends, gentlemen of the I. W. W., were haled before the Ogden police court a few days ago, charged with trespass. They had ridden into town as deadhead passengers on trains from Portland. One of them elected himself spokesman, and stated to the court that he considered he had a right to steal anything he wanted from a railroad company. The railroad company was running a train to the state which he wished to visit, and he took the liberty to steal a ride. He seemed surprised that any one, judge or other, could hold to the opinion that he had violated any law which humanity had a right to respect.

The trouble about the case is that much the same sentiment seems to support the decision of the Portland judge. It was different in the Ogden case, for there the court gave the trespassers a moderate sentence of imprisonment as punishment for their trespass. He couldn't very well fine them the amount of money value they had stolen from the railroad company; but if he had moved on the lines of the Portland judge, he would have found no charge at all against the trespassers.

There is far too much of a notion that it is right to steal from a railroad company. "Thou shalt not steal" doesn't seem to apply to the man who has a chance to steal from the railroad. That is the commandment which people without consciences want to have made movable. They want

The Peril of the Underpaid Employe

Three members of the city commission—Morris, Korns and Lawrence—voted against increasing the pay of the city firemen on the ground that the city is in a poor financial condition and the treasury cannot stand the increased expense.

The firemen—every man in the department with the exception of the chief—responded to the refusal of salary increase by resigning, striking not for higher wages so much as against a system which compels them to work at a less-than-living wage.

"The city has to make too many improvements," say the commissioners who refused the wage increase of firemen, "and cannot spend any more money for salaries."

Under the present management no one expects that the city will improve its financial condition.

The reactionaries in control of the city administration demand that men shall risk their lives in the protection of the city from fire and refuse to pay a living wage for this service.

The fire department is a most vital part of the city government upon its efficiency depend great fortunes; upon the skill of its men often depend the lives of many persons and property worth millions. The refusal of the reactionary commissioners to pay firemen enough to meet the cost of living means one of two things: The firemen must be dishonest in order to support themselves or their families; or the fire department must be divested of skilled, efficient men, and filled with a lot of riff-raff that can't distinguish between a bunch of firehose and a dish of spaghetti.

If the reactionary commissioners would investigate the home life of firemen they would be startled at the conditions revealed.

And if the city commission had the intelligence it is paid for having its members could very easily lop off a few hundred dollars each month from the amount of money paid for legal advice, rendered regularly and religiously to keep the aforesaid commissioners out of trouble.

It's about time Salt Lake shook off this two-by-four, hand to mouth method of running the city.

It to apply to every one who tries to steal from them, but held as inoperative and void in the matter of property of the railroad companies which any one else may happen to want.

For myself, I can see no good reason to draw the line. Railroad companies have as much right to their own property as the rest of us have to ours. And the man who takes dishonestly from a railroad is as much of a thief as he who steals from a private citizen. In the case in point, as we lawyers say, the government gave that land to the railroad company a great many years ago, and for something in the way of valuable consideration which the government—the people of the United States—very much wanted, and considered worth at least the value of the land conveyed. The railroad company paid the price specified, and then proceeded to make the land valuable. It never had been valuable before the railroads got busy, and it never would have been valuable if they had not got busy.

They made the land valuable by their services, by their improvements, by their investments and their enterprises. They encouraged men to make homes on that land, and so built cities. They paid taxes with which the people of regions affected by the land built their roads and constructed their bridges. They aided business men who opened stores in the towns that grew up because the railroad companies developed the resources of that land.

And after two or three generations the government comes along and notes that the land has a market value, and immediately institutes suit for the recovery of the land. The country has forgotten the price paid, has forgotten the conditions under which the original transfer was made, has forgotten the sacrifices and the investments made by the railroad company, and simply looks at the value of the improved land, and considers it has grounds to vacate the title. So the title is vacated.

It is not creditable to the government to realize